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ANNALS
OF THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE.

MAY, 1892.

THE PRACTICAL WORKING OF THE
AUSTRALIAN SYSTEM OF VOTING
IN MASSACHUSETTS.

Is a Republic a permanent form of government? This may seem a strange question to ask in these days, but is it so strange after all? What Republics have not fallen, and fallen by their own corruption? Switzerland, the only exception, is peculiarly situated. She is singularly without concentrated wealth, with a rural population, with an area of about one-third that of Pennsylvania and a population but two-thirds as large. Greece fell through corruption, while Rome, more really a true Republic, became an empire because its inhabitants were tired of having its elections bought for money. In the year B. C. 62, Cæsar owed net over a million of dollars; Mark Antony at twenty-four owed \$250,000, and at thirty-nine he owed \$1,500,000; and Milo, in the year B. C. 52, owed nearly \$3,500,000, all for bribery and campaign expenses. Three years after the latter date

Rome ceased to be a Republic. Attempts were made to prevent bribery ; the *lex Maria*, or law by which narrow *pontes* or bridges were established by which voters had to approach the polls so as to be protected from the political "workers," was passed B. C. 119, but it was only a partial measure, like some of our bad ballot laws. Very strenuous punishments were imposed for bribery, but these latter laws came too late. The people had become fond of being bribed ; they were bought like swine, but they loved to have it so.

The United States as a Republic is now on its trial. What will be the end ?

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, but there will be no effective vigilance without political morality. Political morality is the very foundation of a Republic, without which it must surely fall. Those who sneer at morality in politics are enemies of the Republic. He who makes light of the Decalogue as applied to public affairs is a traitor to our form of government.

This is no doubt clear to all. What is not so clear is the powerful effect that mere mechanism exercises on morality. A method that lets cheating be easy, successful and undetected tends to bad morals. Banks without book-keeping, checks, safe and counter, with nothing to make stealing difficult and hazardous, would generate thieving. So a method of voting which makes intimidation and bribery easy to perform, and hard to detect and punish, offers prizes for the best bribers, while it drives good men to resort to the bad methods to counteract the evil deeds of the bad men, and the bad men in their turn, encouraged by the bad example of the good, redouble their efforts.

Men, too conscientious to resort to bad methods even for the sake of party success, soon drop out of party management. They may do well for figure-heads, but not for a trick at the wheel or for trimming the yards. The result is demoralizing in the extreme. Young men are taught that dishonesty is the best policy in politics ; such dishonesty is

approved of, at least about election time, while integrity in campaigns is publicly sneered at.

A mechanism, on the other hand, that will put serious obstacles in the way of fraud and will give honesty a fair chance not only helps political morality, but in so doing will save our great experiment in government of the people, by and for themselves.

Yet there are many good men living under a system that allows all the public patronage to be freely used to influence nominations and elections, and under a system that encourages dishonesty, fraud, intimidation and bribery in voting, and yet they wonder why it is that things go wrong. They put the good influences at the short arm of the lever and then are surprised at the power of the bad influences. And again these same good people not only do nothing to change the mechanism of the lever, but often stand aloof from, if not positively ridicule, the attempts of those who are trying to shift the fulcrum.

Such a mechanism for good is the Australian Ballot system. It was introduced into Australia in 1856, sixteen years later into England, and sixteen years after that into the United States.

As a citizen of Massachusetts, let me say a word as to the introduction of the system there. It has been frequently assumed by the *New York Nation*, by Mr. Joseph B. Bishop in a recent article in the *Forum* and by others that the Massachusetts law was a mere copy of the New York law. That is not the case. I belong to a small club of about fifteen members called the "Dutch Treat" which meets in Boston to dine and discuss public reforms. A year and a half before the agitation in New York, and having no notion that there was to be any in that State, we had discussed the idea of an officially printed and secretly marked ballot. I had been appointed a committee of one to report to the club. In the report I outlined a bill and prepared a form of ballot that would fit our registering ballot boxes. About a year later there was an agitation for ballot reform in the Boston

City Council and among the labor organizations of our State. One of our number, Mr. H. H. Sprague, was elected to the State Senate and was made Chairman of the Committee on Election Laws. Encouraged by these signs, our club revised the outline of a bill and two or three of us went before the committee of the legislature. We found there to our surprise several other plans submitted, notably a complete bill presented by Mr. E. B. Hayes, of Lynn, a member of the lower house. The Committee on Election Laws seemed to prefer our plan on the whole and requested that we should draft a bill in full. This bill Mr. Hayes supported as cordially as if it had been his own. Mr. Hayes tells me that he never heard of the New York movement till he was asked by the men in New York for a copy of his own bill, which he sent on to Mr. Saxton. Our club decided that for the sake of uniformity we should adopt some of the features and phraseology of the New York bill in our final draft submitted to the Legislature. The truth is the movement was wholly independent and yet simultaneous in both States. The New York bill was passed early in the session and vetoed by Governor Hill. Ours was delayed till the end of the session and securing the Governor's approval, became law first.

Since the successful operation in Massachusetts the system has spread till now it is the law in thirty-three States; in a good form in twenty-six, in poor form in three, in bad form in two and in fair form in one, according to the authority of Mr. Bishop. Pennsylvania, I am sorry to say, is classed as one of the two "bad."

The idea of the system is simple. The government furnishes each voter with a marking list, and this list or official ballot is marked in secret, and is the only ballot allowed to be cast. These are the essentials:—a single official ballot and secrecy.

The list of candidates may be arranged alphabetically under the names of the respective offices to be filled, or in party groups. In Massachusetts we have the alphabetical order, and this we think is the best method. Eleven States

allow a single cross to be marked for a party group, and nineteen follow substantially the Massachusetts plan. The greatest objection to the party group system with the right to mark the whole group with a single cross is not that it favors party as against independent candidates, important as that objection is. The chief objection is that it does not always secure secrecy. Sometimes, and indeed not infrequently, the only doubt is as to *one* objectionable candidate. The only question is as to whether the regular party men will vote for him or not. If the men of his party stay at the marking shelf long enough only to make one cross, they must have voted the "straight" party ticket including the objectionable candidate. To vote the party ticket with the exception of voting against that one candidate, separate crosses must be made against each name of the party group except the objectionable one, and in some other party group or among the independents must be found and marked another candidate for the same office. The difference in time is enough to show any skilful watcher, who has "bolted" and who has not. I know this plan of noting the time taken by voters to have been carried out in Connecticut with great success, for in order to "bolt" a single candidate under the new law there it took longer to prepare the ballot than to vote the regular ticket. Any system which allows it to be ascertained how voters vote does not secure secrecy, and is, so far, an inferior law.

The chief evils under the old system which it was hoped to cure were the following: it was nobody's business to furnish correct ballots to the voter. Furnishing ballots was usually left to irresponsible party sub-committees, with the result that fraudulent ballots were distributed with, for example, the heading "Regular Democratic," while having a Republican candidate in place of the Democratic one and *vice versa*, or names were spelt wrongly so as to make the vote ineffective. Nominations of bad men for minor offices were made late, committees often "reporting nominations at the polls," giving no time for a public exposure of the candidate.

Ballot holders had to be furnished by the parties, and the expense of this, together with the cost of printing ballots, was made a pretext for raising large sums of money. Influence was bought by paying handsomely for popular men to hold the ballots and persuade their friends to vote the special ticket, while voters were bribed under the guise of being hired as ballot holders, sometimes fully one-eighth of the voters being hired by both parties together to peddle ballots in a precinct.

There was pushing and crowding to prevent voters from voting. Noise and confusion almost always prevailed in a large number of city voting places, while all the time it was perfectly possible to know how each voter was voting and so to use bribery and intimidation.

What have been the results of the recent legislation? As far as Massachusetts goes, at least, all fraudulent and misleading ballots and misspelled names have ceased. Ballot holders are no longer needed. Some few candidates have circulars distributed at the polls, but the voters, as a rule, do not take these circulars or read them, and delivering by mail the evening before election is far the best way of reaching the voters. There is ample time to examine into the character of all candidates, as eighteen days before election is the latest when nominations can be made at the State election. So far, less money is needed by the parties at the elections.

Quiet, order and cleanliness reign in and about the polling places. I have visited precincts where, under the old system, coats were torn off the backs of voters, where ballots of one kind have been snatched from voter's hands and others put in their place, with threats against using any but the substituted ballots; and under the new system all was orderly and peaceable. Indeed, the self-respect in voting under the new system is alone worth all the extra cost to the State.

Bribery is very greatly diminished, almost altogether ceasing; but it is too much to say it is wholly and perma-

nently stopped. It probably exists now to a small extent, and will undoubtedly grow. Some corrupt voters are true to their corrupt bargains. There is also a tendency to vote for the "barrel" candidates, in order to encourage the free use of money. One way to bribe is said to be to bet on the result, or on the size of the vote, the voter to be bribed taking the side for which the money is spent.

Sometimes it is possible to buy in bulk and pay according to the result. For example, in a precinct of 450 voters 200 may be of one party and 200 of another, all of whom are above being bribed, and 50 "floaters." It is very easy to pay according as these fifty have gone as shown by the returns.

A still more certain way is to pay voters of the opposite party to stay away from the polls, or not to be registered for voting at all.

We need something more than the ballot law even in its most perfect form. We need civil service reform to prevent bribery by government patronage and a law both to limit and make public the election expenses. In England the ballot act was passed in 1872, while in 1883 it was found necessary to pass the corrupt practices act, which is said to be far and away a surer prevention of bribery than the ballot act alone. Still though we hear these rumors of bribery, there is no doubt the new voting system has placed great obstacles in its way and will be of still greater service when supplemented by corrupt practices acts.

As to intimidation, that seems to have been stopped altogether.

In considering how the new system has worked in Massachusetts it is well to review some of the current objections made to the law before it was put in operation.

It was said it would be a great expense to the State and cities; that it would take a long time to mark the ballot; that in the big towns, where large numbers voted at the same place, there would be delay; that the less educated would be kept from the polls; that if they came to the polls

they would not know how to mark their ballots and that the system would favor independents and tend to break up parties. But what have been the practical results?

As to cost, fewer ballots are printed by the State than were printed by the parties. The cost the first year, 1889, for printing and distributing to nearly one thousand voting places in the State was \$17,130, and in the next two years it was less than half the cost of the first year, being only \$8,175.26 * in 1891 for 1,010,500 ballots.

The fittings in Boston cost \$35 for each precinct, but as the fixtures were made so as to fold up and be taken away and used from year to year, it is safe to say they do not cost over \$5 a year for each precinct besides the cost of moving back and forth. In towns from 300 to 1500 inhabitants the extra original outlay has been from \$4 to \$30 a town by actual report.

The time taken is less than before. To be sure a voter who took a ballot under the old system without inquiry and happened to hit upon a time when the crowd was not great would save half a minute or so, but with the necessity of careful examination for fear of being misled by a fraudulent ballot and all the crowding and pushing under the old system, it is generally agreed that it takes actually less time under the new.

As to the big towns with large numbers voting at one place there has been no delay or inconvenience. At North Adams 1786 ballots were cast at one polling place. During no part of the day were the forty compartments all occupied at one time. Before the names of forty voters in succession could be found and checked and the voters admitted, those who had first entered had marked their ballots, voted and passed out. At Pittsfield 2589 votes were cast in four precincts, at Brookline 1249 votes, at Hyde Park 1236, at Dedham 998 and at Everett 979 votes were cast, all at one precinct each and with the utmost facility and comfort to the voters. We hear of no trouble from delay in any town.

* Abstract of Report of Auditor of Accts. of Mass. Dec., 31, 1891, p. 11.

The average time taken to mark about 18 out of 55 names seems to be under two minutes and often less than one minute is required.

As to the less educated being kept from the polls the statistics are conclusive. The average number voting in the State in the last three years under the new system is greater than in any of the past seven years, excepting the presidential year, and the same is true for the city of Boston, both in the State and city elections.

Old System.	VOTE FOR GOVERNOR		Vote for Mayor of Boston.
	In the State (Mass.)	In the City of Boston.	
1885,	209,688	41,683	44,682
1886,	243,769	45,467	45,667
1887,	266,032	49,423	51,820
1888, (Presidential year)	343,114	64,923	63,548
New System.			
1889,	263,111	Av. 296,331	52,578 . . . 56 877
1890,	295,430		54,088 . . . 54,254*
1891,	330,451		62,496 . . . 55,019*

But though that may be so how about the more illiterate districts? Let me explain here that though we have a reading and writing qualification in Massachusetts it does not form a barrier to a certain amount of voting by the illiterate. No one who was a voter in 1857 is excluded whether he can read and write or not, and all the law requires of voters becoming such since 1857 is that each be able to write his own name and read from the State Constitution. It is held that printing letters, misspelled names and indeed anything that can be deciphered as a signature is all that is required for writing; while the most clumsy spelling-out kind of reading passes muster, and there is reason to believe that the first few words of the Constitution are sometimes learned by heart by persons who pass, though really unable to read at all. Our experience therefore has some bearing on the illiterate voter. The cities in our State are supposed

* In these years the election of Mayor was nearly a foregone conclusion, and so the vote was light.

to contain a larger proportion of illiterate voters than the towns and yet in each of the three years a considerably larger percentage of the registered voters have voted in the cities than in the towns. Again out of the 25 cities, Holyoke,

	Average Per Cent. of Voters voting in the Cities.	Average Per Cent. voting in the Towns.
1889,	75.3	64.7
1890,	83.16	72.63
1891,	86.71	80.06

one of the chief manufacturing cities, had the highest percent.; Lowell, a large manufacturing city, came next; Cambridge, which has a larger factory population than is usually supposed, came third, and Lawrence, another city chiefly noted for its factories, came fourth in 1889. In 1890 Lowell was first, Lawrence second and Fall River third at the State elections, and at the city elections the order was Fall River, Lowell and Lawrence. The three highest were thus the three leading manufacturing cities of the State.

THE HIGHEST IN ORDER OF THE CITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS ARRANGED BY PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED VOTERS VOTING.

STATE ELECTIONS.		
1889. Per Cent.	1890. Per Cent.	1891. Per Cent.
Holyoke, . . . 85	Lowell, . . . 89.62	Lowell, . . . 90.69
Lowell, . . . 83.1	Lawrence, . 88.45	Cambridge, . 90.26
Cambridge, . . 79.6	Fall River, . 87.29	Salem, . . . 89.83
Lawrence, . . 78.8		
Av. for State, . 70.7	Av. for State, 78.21	Av. for State, 83.82
CITY ELECTIONS.		
	Fall River, . 92.66	Fall River, . 92.62
No Statistics.	Lowell, . . . 90.54	Lowell, . . . 91.06
	Lawrence, . 90.31	Holyoke, . . 90.12

Again, in the city of Boston, whether we compare the one best and the one least educated ward or whether we compare the six best and the six least educated wards, we find that the percentage who voted at the State election was very nearly the same in each, and actually larger in the city election in those wards containing the largest proportion of poorly educated voters.

PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED VOTERS VOTING 1889.

	State Election. Per Cent.	Municipal Election. Per Cent.
Ward 13 (least average education),	76.7	87.0
Ward 21 (best average education),	77.7	80.0
Six wards with least average education,	76.74	83.30
Six wards with the most average education,	76.79	79.61

But though the illiterate wards may have made so good a showing in proportion to the registered voters, may it not be that men were kept from registering? What do the facts show us as to that? The results here are again most instructive. Whether we take the one most illiterate ward by itself or the six most illiterate together, we find that in 1889 the first year of the new system, though an off year of off years, the number of registered voters was greater than in any of the years previous excepting the presidential year, and the proportion of registered voters to the assessed polls was also greater than any but the presidential year and only a very little less than in that year.

NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS IN THE WARDS WITH THE LEAST AVERAGE EDUCATION IN BOSTON, FROM 1885 TO 1891, INCLUSIVE.

Old System.	Ward 13.	Wards 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 19.
1885,	2,513	12,033
1886,	2,577	11,665
1887,	2,744	12,777
1888,	3,285 (Presidential year,) .	15,010
New System.		
1889,	2,955	13,463
1890,	2,685	12,881
1891,	2,869	13,054

NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS IN PROPORTION TO ASSESSED POLLS IN 1889

was in Ward 13			
10.3 per cent. larger than in 1885			
8.5 " " "			1886
4.3 " " "			1887
1.4 less " "			1888 (Presidential year.)
was in Wards 6, 7, 8, 12, 13 and 19			
4.4 per cent. larger than in 1885			
5.0 " " "			1886
1.0 " " "			1887
3.6 less " "			1888 (Presidential year.)

Ballot for same Ward and Precinct as it would have been but for
the changes in 1855-57. (See below, p. 15.)

To Vote for a Person, mark a Cross (x) in the Square at the right of the name.

GOVERNOR.....Vote for ONE.

JOHN BLACKMER—of Springfield.....Prohibition

JOHN Q. A. BRACKETT—of Arlington.....Republican

WILLIAM E. RUSSELL—of Cambridge.....Democratic

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.....Vote for ONE.

JOHN W. CORCORAN—of Clinton.....Democratic

WILLIAM H. HAILE—of Springfield.....Republican

BENJAMIN F. STURTEVANT—of Boston.....Prohibition

COUNCILLOR—Third District.....Vote for ONE.

ROBERT O. FULLER—of Cambridge.....Republican

ISAAC W. GAMMONS—of Somerville.....Prohibition

WILLIAM E. PLUMMER—of Newton.....Democratic

COUNTY COMMISSIONER.....Vote for ONE.

WILLIAM S. FROST—of Marlborough.....Republican

ELMER D. HOWE—of Marlborough.....Prohibition

JOHN L. HUNT—of Lowell.....Democratic

SENATOR—Third Middlesex District.....Vote for ONE.

FREEMAN HUNT—of Cambridge.....Democratic

EDWARD KENDALL—of Cambridge.....Prohibition

JOHN READ—of Cambridge.....Republican

REPRESENTATIVES IN GENERAL COURT.....Vote for Two.

Fourth Middlesex District.

JOSEPH G. BALL—of Cambridge.....Prohibition

EDWARD F. BURNS—of Cambridge.....Democratic

FRANK W. DALLINGER—of Cambridge.....Republican

CHARLES W. HENDERSON—of Cambridge.....Republican

WILLIAM F. MORRILL—of Cambridge.....Democratic

HUGH STEWART—of Cambridge.....Prohibition

OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR PRECINCT 5, WARD 4, CAMBRIDGE.

NOVEMBER 5, 1889.

[Five sixths of the size of the ballot actually used.]

To Vote for a Person, mark a Cross (x) in the Square at the right of the name.

GOVERNOR Vote for ONE.

JOHN BLACKMER—of Springfield Prohibition	
JOHN Q. A. BRACKETT—of Arlington Republican	
WILLIAM E. RUSSELL—of Cambridge Democratic	

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR Vote for ONE.

JOHN W. CORCORAN—of Clinton Democratic	
WILLIAM H. HAILE—of Springfield Republican	
BENJAMIN F. STURTEVANT—of Boston Prohibition	

SECRETARY Vote for ONE.

GEORGE D. CRITTENDEN—of Buckland Prohibition	
WILLIAM N. OSGOOD—of Boston Democratic	
HENRY B. PEIRCE—of Abington Republican	

TREASURER AND RECEIVER GENERAL Vote for ONE.

GEORGE A. MARDEN—of Lowell Republican	
EDWIN L. MUNN—of Holyoke Democratic	
FREDERICK L. WING—of Ashburnham Prohibition	

AUDITOR Vote for ONE.

WILLIAM H. GLEASON—of Boston Prohibition	
CHARLES R. LADD—of Springfield Republican	
WILLIAM D. T. TREFRY—of Marblehead Democratic	

ATTORNEY-GENERAL Vote for ONE.

ALLEN COFFIN—of Nantucket Prohibition	
ELISHA B. MAYNARD—of Springfield Democratic	
ANDREW J. WATERMAN—of Pittsfield Republican	

COUNCILLOR—Third District Vote for ONE.

ROBERT O. FULLER—of Cambridge Republican	
ISAAC W. GAMMONS—of Somerville Prohibition	
WILLIAM E. PLUMMER—of Newton Democratic	

DISTRICT ATTORNEY—Northern District Vote for ONE.

PATRICK H. COONEY—of Natick . Democratic. Republican	
FRANK M. FORBUSH—of Natick. Prohibition	

SHERIFF Vote for ONE.

HENRY G. CUSHING—of Lowell . Democratic. Republican	
JOHN HOWARD NASON—of Woburn Prohibition	

COUNTY COMMISSIONER Vote for ONE.

WILLIAM S. FROST—of Marlborough Republican	
ELMER D. HOWE—of Marlborough Prohibition	
JOHN L. HUNT—of Lowell Democratic	

SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS Vote for Two.

FRANCIS N. BARDWELL—of Cambridge Prohibition	
GEORGE O. BYAM—of Chelmsford Democratic	
LYMAN DYKE—of Stoneham Republican	
MARCELLUS H. FLETCHER—of Lowell Democratic	
RUFUS H. HAPGOOD—of Hudson Prohibition	
EDWARD E. THOMPSON—of Woburn Republican	

COMMISSIONERS OF INSOLVENCY Vote for THREE.

GEORGE J. BURNS—of Ayer Republican	
JAMES H. CARMICHAEL—of Lowell Democratic	
FREDERIC T. GREENHALGE—of Lowell Republican	
GEORGE W. HEYWOOD—of Westford Democratic	
JOHN C. KENNEDY—of Newton Republican	
HENRY C. MULLIGAN—of Natick Democratic	

SENATOR—Third Middlesex District Vote for ONE.

FREEMAN HUNT—of Cambridge Democratic	
EDWARD KENDALL—of Cambridge Prohibition	
JOHN READ—of Cambridge Republican	

REPRESENTATIVES IN GENERAL COURT Vote for Two.
Fourth Middlesex District.

JOSEPH G. BALL—of Cambridge Prohibition	
EDWARD F. BURNS—of Cambridge Democratic	
FRANK W. DALLINGER—of Cambridge Republican	
CHARLES W. HENDERSON—of Cambridge Republican	
WILLIAM F. MORRILL—of Cambridge Democratic	
HUGH STEWART—of Cambridge Prohibition	

As to whether the voters in the illiterate wards were able to mark their ballots, let me say that the above statements of voting are based not on the number attempting to vote, but on the number of ballots actually cast, properly marked and counted, after deducting all blanks or improperly marked ballots.

The city clerk of Boston, who was present at some of the recounts in 1889, told me that the ballots from the illiterate wards were more carefully and plainly marked by the voters than in the wards where the better educated lived.

As to favoring independents and breaking up the party organizations, the result has shown that no candidates receive any considerable support unless backed up by a strong public sentiment. The only independents who prevail against the regular party nominees are those who are nominated as a protest against some bad candidate or some unfair proceeding at the caucus or convention. The restraining influence of the new system on the caucuses and conventions is already very great, and no doubt these good results will grow. Yet the parties in State and national affairs retain their power whenever it is properly used, while a candidate, defeated at a fairly held caucus, who rushes to the "nomination papers" gets very little support indeed. Many of the cities in Massachusetts, other than Boston, have conducted their municipal elections on non-partisan lines, and since the new system of voting this custom has rather increased. Caucuses of citizens are usually held, but in Somerville this year all the candidates for city offices were nominated by the petition of their fellow-citizens or by "nomination papers" as they are called. The truth is that the people have a fair chance to show their good common sense under the new system, and the people have always had that good sense in abundance. Under the bad mechanism of the old system they were put at a disadvantage in trying to express their wishes at the polls.

Since the new system has been at work there have been some criticisms. There has been observed a general falling

off of the vote from the head of the ticket. It has been argued from this that there was a difficulty found in marking the ballots; that voters got tired and actually stopped marking from sheer fatigue.

If, under the old system of voting, there had been no falling off the argument might have weight, otherwise not. In New York, under the old system, there were separate ballots for different classes of officers at the same election which had to be cast in separate urns or boxes. For example, in the last Presidential election (1888), the voters had to vote for governor on a different ballot from the one containing Presidential electors and congressmen, and the vote for assemblymen was on still another. At that election the falling off from Presidential electors to assemblymen was very nearly as much in proportion as the falling off from governor to State senator in 1889 under the new system in Massachusetts. It is noticeable that in Massachusetts in 1889, while the falling off was continuous from the governor, through lieutenant governor, secretary, treasurer, auditor and attorney-general, it increased again when it came to senator, although senators were next to the last on the ballot.

But a still more careful analysis shows that this phenomenon had nothing to do with the difficulty of reading or marking the ballot.

In the one most illiterate ward (13) in Boston the vote for senator was actually 33 more than that for governor, while in the best educated ward (21) the vote fell off by 88 or 3 per cent. But the whole is easily explained by noticing that in the senatorial districts where there was a close and exciting contest for senator, there was but very little, if any, falling off from the vote of governor to that of senator, while in many senatorial districts the result was a foregone conclusion, and the vote for senator was accordingly light. Many of the other offices which we fill by election represent no political principles. The secretary of the commonwealth has no executive discretion. He is a chief clerk.

The treasurer, auditor, attorney-general, the clerks of court, registers of deeds and registers of probate, commissioners of insolvency, sheriffs, special commissioners and district attorneys which cumber our ballots and in which the people at large take so little interest, were not made elective by the wise founders of our State, but were brought into politics in the Know-Nothing movement in 1855.

The amount of the vote cast for special offices is an indication of the interest taken, as a careful study of the situation of the returns amply proves. The falling off in the vote for the less interesting offices is thus clearly shown to arise from no difficulty in marking the ballot, but is a frank expression of the feeling of the voters.

It has been asserted that during the counting or recounting the marks on the ballots have been changed. The counting is all done in public view and by some six or more persons of different parties, and it is not so easy as one might think to change the marks without being detected. In one instance this autumn a man tried to alter a ballot and was caught in the act, and has already been prosecuted and convicted. The assertions of instances in the city of Boston where ballots had been altered seem to have been made without good foundation or inquiry on the part of those who made them. During a recount of the ballots members of the Ballot Act League got permission to represent some of the contesting candidates, and examined the ballots with care. There seems to be no evidence of alterations of the ballots.*

There is, however, some danger in the counting. There

* BOSTON, March 18th, 1892.

RICHARD H. DANA, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR :—* * * At the time of the recent recount of votes for school committee by a sub-committee of the Boston School Board, of which I was a member, I was happily surprised by the general intelligence displayed by the voters and the accuracy with which they indicated their preference for candidates. I was prepared to discover evidence that the votes had in many instances been tampered with, but am glad to say that it would be quite an assumption to declare that any vote had been changed after leaving the voter's hand. * * *

Yours very truly,

B. B. WHITLEMORE.

is, however, *no greater danger than under the old system*. The trouble seems to be that the counting is left to persons unused to clerical work, and who are tired out with a long day's duties as election officers at the polls. The legislature is now considering plans for a better system of counting.

The system of challenging voters has been taken advantage of in some few cases to avoid the secrecy of the ballot of the challenged voters, the present law requiring the name of a challenged voter to be written on his ballot. The legislature is considering, and will doubtless adopt, a measure for obviating this danger, small as it is.

On the whole the new system has worked with more success and has met with more immediate and enthusiastic approval than its most ardent supporters expected. It is so popular in Massachusetts that no one can be found who in any way objects to the system. On the contrary there is the greatest jealousy for the perfection of the law in all its details, and the present committee on election laws have no attacks on the law to consider, but only well-intended amendments. Persons who, up to the first day of voting under the new method, had staked their reputation on its failure were immediately convinced, and the next day frankly applauded what they had derided but two days before.

So pleased are the voters that the percentage of those who come to vote has steadily increased, until last year it reached 84.73 per cent. for the whole State, the largest proportion since the defeat of General Butler, in 1883, excepting presidential years, while in some of the cities we have had the unprecedented figures of 90, 91 and nearly 93 per cent. of the male voters casting their ballots. Voting is made dignified, as indeed the exercise of our great franchise should be. The voter feels that the election is more nearly an expression of the thoughtful wish of the community than ever before, and it makes it worth his while to attend the polls.

The last three years have been replete with illustrations

of the beneficial working of the law, in the defeat of bad candidates and in the election of good ones for the smaller and non-political offices regardless of party. The cause of no license has gained under the new system, even in those districts where the influence of the saloon had been most potent, but perhaps the best single illustration can be found in the city of Boston. In the State election in November, 1889, the city had gone Democratic by 5,600 plurality, about the average in a non-presidential year. The very next month came the municipal election. The Democrats had nominated a man by no means bad, but one having nothing like the public confidence that was placed in the Republican candidate. The city immediately changed its vote to a nearly equal plurality for the Republican candidate. The next year, 1890, the Republicans put up a weak and discredited candidate and the Democrats a strong and influential one, and the Democratic candidate, Matthews, was elected by 12,253 plurality. Matthews made a most excellent mayor and won the public confidence, and the next year, 1891, he was elected by 15,174, a gain of nearly 2,000 over Governor Russell's large plurality in the city a month before, and all this without the expense or trouble of printing independent ballots and manning the polls with an army of ballot-holders. All that was necessary was to appeal to the intelligent consciences of our citizens.

In conclusion, let me add, we must not be satisfied until we have thorough reform in all that pertains to the free and unbought expression of the public will at election. Let us not be satisfied with some half-way measure, which, like the *lex Maria* at Rome, will deceive the people into thinking they are protected in their franchise when they are not. Let us not be content until we do away with the bribery through the patronage of public offices, by means of a thorough civil service reform in nation, State and city,—until we have adequate ballot laws, strenuous laws against bribery of the voter by money, and radical measures to secure the limitation and publication of election expenses.

No true lover of his country, no one with faith in a Republican form of government, and no believer in the ultimate triumph of good principles, can have seen the rapid spread of ballot reform throughout the country as a response to the bad election methods of the last Presidential election without being uplifted, and amid all our discouragements and defeats in the cause of good government, during all the long and fierce warfare, this voice of the public conscience

“ Steals on the ear like a distant trumpet song,
And hearts are brave again and arms are strong.”

RICHARD H. DANA.

Boston.